



# News Release

Office of the Superintendent, P.O. Box 30008, Lansing, MI 48909, Phone: 517.241.0494, Fax: 517.335.4565

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

October 1, 2002

Contact: T.J. Bucholz

(517) 241-4395

## **Department Welcomes Hart Bill Package**

### **Legislation Would Dramatically Consolidate State Education Systems**

The Michigan Department of Education is in complete support of a package of bills sponsored by a Republican legislator which would bring continuity to state education policy.

State Representative Doug Hart (R-Rockford) has introduced House Bills 6455, 6456, 6457, and 6458 to unify state education administration and programming within the Department of Education.

Hart said he created the bills because he believes many Michigan educator, parents, and the business community are becoming demoralized through their dealings with a fractured state government dealing with various facets of educational policy.

"Michigan is in need of continuity of vision in the implementation of K-12 education policy," Hart said. "We need one vision, one team, and one organization focused on serving Michigan's children."

The package of bills would place the following functions back into the Department of Education:

- Administration of the Michigan Educational Assessment Program (MEAP) out of the Department of Treasury;
- Administration of the Center for Educational Performance and Information (CEPI) out of the Department of Management and Budget;
- Administration of Michigan Virtual University, currently mired in jurisdictional confusion;
- Administration of Michigan Commission on Asia out of the Department of History, Arts, and Libraries;
- Administration of Vocational Education out of the Department of Career Development, and;
- Administration of Adult Education out of the Department of Career Development.

Michigan's Constitution specifically gives education policy making authority to the State Board of Education, and the Department of Education works as its operational and administrative agency. It is led by Tom Watkins, Michigan's Superintendent of Public Instruction. The Superintendent of Public Instruction is appointed by the State Board of Education.

Watkins said numerous K-12 education administrative functions are currently scattered throughout state government bureaucracy.

"Consolidating education policy again under the authority of the elected State Board of Education is the best way to provide accountability to the citizens of Michigan," Watkins said. "For far too long, education policy has been scattered throughout state government like the scarecrow in the Wizard of Oz. It's time to place control of K-12 education back in the hands of the people - the State Board of Education."

Both Lt. Gov. Dick Posthumus and Attorney General Jennifer Granholm, candidates for Governor, have acknowledged that the state would benefit from consistent education policy in the future.

"At the dawn of the 21st century, it is time to begin the discussion of how to best execute our education vision in the state of Michigan," Hart concluded. "I believe we are better served by one team, one vision, one captain. Tom Watkins and the State Board of Education have demonstrated that they have the passion, energy, and vision to lead our system of public education into the future. These bills will help create the structure to allow them to do so."

###